



Peter Franchot
Comptroller

September 13, 2011

Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council Members :

As a longtime resident of Montgomery County – one who raised a family here while representing the 20th Legislative District for more than two decades in Annapolis – I have been following the debate over proposed teen curfew legislation as a vested community stakeholder. As Maryland's Chief Fiscal Officer, I also feel an obligation to offer my perspective on issues that substantially affect our state's economic vitality and our ability to sustain good-paying jobs, public revenues and private sector investment. It is with each of those roles in mind that I offer my strong and resounding support of the curfew legislation as it is currently proposed.

My wife and I moved to Takoma Park because we felt it was an extraordinary place in so many ways. Over the years, we have enjoyed all that Montgomery County has to offer and we believe, now more than ever, that it is a special place to live and raise a family. Much of that can be attributed to our longstanding tradition of identifying and addressing our challenges in a timely manner.

For example, we simply cannot ignore the rise in disruptive and dangerous activities in town centers throughout Montgomery County. It has often been said that "nothing good happens after midnight," and in this case I wholeheartedly agree. Recent reports of crime, teen violence and gang-related activity send a chilling message to the entire region at a time when our local businesses are struggling to survive our nation's extended economic downturn.

Whether it is the young family out for dinner and a movie in Downtown Silver Spring, a couple enjoying a live performance in Downtown Bethesda, or a responsible teenager working nights at the Rockville Town Center, the consumers and workers who are vital to the health of Montgomery County's economy will understandably go elsewhere out of a concern for their well-being and that of their families. We are all proud of the time and effort that has gone into creating these vibrant centers of commerce; however, they simply will not remain competitive if we allow them to be perceived as unsafe and unwelcoming.

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As you know, I was actively involved in the renaissance of Downtown Silver Spring, and have watched with great pride as it has become a regional hub for shopping, fine dining, live entertainment and the performing arts. I know the extraordinary challenges that had to be overcome to arrive at this point, and how hard our business, elected officials and civic leaders worked to make it happen. The same is obviously true for communities in Rockville, Bethesda, Gaithersburg, Germantown and other places that have dynamic town centers, just as it is for everyone who has worked tirelessly through the years to preserve the character of their residential communities.

There is no doubt that we want our children to enjoy all that our county has to offer and to be able to do so in a safe and welcoming environment. As our neighbors in Baltimore, Prince George's County and the District of Columbia have shown, you can foster a dynamic and engaging community for kids while still decisively ensuring public safety. With the important modifications that have been made to the initial draft, this legislation represents an even-handed and pragmatic response to issues that, left unaddressed, could severely compromise those very qualities that have made Montgomery County such an appealing destination for so many.

For the protection of our children, our families and our communities, I urge the Montgomery County Council to pass this crucial piece of legislation. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and for your exceptional service to Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Franchot". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a cursive "Franchot".

Peter Franchot
Comptroller of Maryland

cc: The Honorable Isiah Leggett
The Honorable Valerie Ervin
The Honorable Phil M. Andrews